Stories of the School room

Bardeen

LITTLE BOK

Class PZ3

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(From the Bibliography of Education for 1894, James I. Wyer, Jr., now New York state librarian, in Educational Review, June, 1905)

"Fiction has never before been given place in this bibliography, but these stories are so manifestly the product of a rich experience and so full of sound sense, their abundant and obtrusive 'morals' are so salutary and their portrayal of certain educational shams and evils so vivid, that they certainly deserve serious reading by teachers and trustees."

(From the New York Sun)

"The author has the gift of narration."

(From the Brooklyn Eagle, June 1, 1912)

"What Du Maurier did for the intimate life of the artist, Boucicault for the Irish rebel, Kipling for the British soldier, and Conally for the Gloucester fisherman, Bardeen is doing for the every-day life of the school."

(From the Pedagogical Seminary, G. Stanley Hall, Editor)

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LITTLE BOK

AND OTHER

STORIES ABOUT SCHOOLS

BY

C. W. BARDEEN
Editor of the School Bulletin

SYRACUSE, N. Y.
C. W. BARDEEN, PUBLISHER

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Little Bok

LITTLE BOK

I

Agesilaus Bok was a little man who wanted to be a big one. It was not a matter of size. He was only five feet two but he knew men no taller who filled prominent places and were looked up to. Nobody looked up to him. He was "Little Bok" to everyone, even to his pupils. He was a good principal, prompt, decided, systematic, neat, careful; he got results. He was liked, too, but patronizingly. Some way he never did anything noteworthy. He was common-place. He longed to shine.

II

Where he especially wanted to shine was as an orator. He had a dispropor-

tionate voice, so that the first Latin he ever learned was the quotation frequently applied to him even as a child, "*Vox et praeterea nihil*". After the change it became a baritone, not musical but of considerable carrying power. He entered all declamation contests and chose the most solemn, even sepulchral selections. There was a "Stay, sailor, stay and hear my woe" that he made a particular favorite, and repeated wherever he could find an audience. He tried debating, too, and when he seconded a motion he did it with a formality appropriate to the adoption of a new constitution.

But somehow the only impression he ever produced was of mingled amusement and boredom. One day he confided in the district superintendent, a man of experience and sympathy. "Why does no-

body care for my speeches?" he asked.

"They are too ponderous, too solemn, too obvious. You should enliven them with wit."

"How can I become witty?"

"That is a ponderous question."

III

Little Bok thought about it. He decided that he had adopted wrong models. Daniel Webster was well enough in his way, but the modern generation wanted somebody who would make them laugh. So he subscribed for the works of Mark Twain and read them through. He found them dreary, but if that was the sort of thing an audience wanted he proposed to learn how to produce it.

One day when he was in Ipswich he met the widow of one of the county principals. "My husband left a package of books on

teaching," she said. "They are of no use to me and I wonder if you would like them."

"I should be very glad of them," he replied, and he carried them home.

They were done up in an old number of an educational journal, and as he was throwing it into the waste basket an article caught his eye. It was an address on teaching, and it seemed to have just the quality the district superintendent suggested. It was witty, but the wit was illustrative, pungent. He read it through and then he read it through again and studied it and repeated it. He got off by himself and declaimed it, imagining the laughter and the applause. He made it a model: he tried to write like it.

IV

At a meeting of the county association a friend of his was made chairman of

the nominating committee. "Archibald," Little Bok said to him, "when I lent you that fifty dollars two years ago you said if you could some time do me a favor to let you know."

"I certainly did, Bok, and I hope this is the time."

"It is the time. I should like to be on the list of officers."

"Easiest thing in the world, Bok; you shall be vice-president."

The slate went through and Little Bok was elected. The office amounted to nothing, hardly equal to lieutenant-governor, but it looked well, and the next morning when he awoke and felt a peculiar complacent calm, it did not take him long to recall that it was from the contemplation of the printed announcement, "Vice-president, Agesilaus Bok".

V

A week before the fall meeting the president of the association was elected to a college place in Oregon, and was obliged to start immediately, so he notified Little Bok that the vice-president must take charge of the meeting and deliver the Friday night address.

It was the great opportunity for which he had longed all his life, but now that it had come it overwhelmed him. He got together his imitations of the printed address, but they seemed flat, and he could not stretch them to cover forty minutes. He tried to imbibe inspiration. He repeated the address over and over till he knew it by heart. Every day as he worked over it he was more and more in despair. When Wednesday came and he was farther than ever from a speech of his own the

thought came to him, "Why not use this printed address? It was spoken thirty years ago, nobody knows anything about it now, I saw it only by accident, and I presume this is the only copy in existence. Take a chance on it."

Thursday brought him no help, and Friday left him no option. When he came forward as the speaker of the evening he delivered the address.

He used no notes, he looked his audience in the eye, his voice was distinct and clear, and he had repeated it till his delivery was perfect. The humor caught hold from the first, and Little Bok had what he had longed for all his life, an audience responsive to every word, quick to apprehend, ready to laugh and to applaud. As the consciousness of power came upon him he rose to the occasion; it may be doubted

if the original orator delivered it better. It was the triumph he had dreamed of but hardly hoped to realize.

VI

The enthusiasm of the association was the greater because so little had been expected. "It was in him all the time," some of the older ones said, "but he has never before had opportunity." At the business meeting the next morning he was elected president by acclamation, and superintendents from other districts who were present asked him to give the address at their conferences. The editor of the daily journal came to him for a copy. "Why the fact is," Little Bok said, "I have no copy. I spoke extemporaneously; I did not even have notes."

"Couldn't you write it out for me?" the editor asked.

"I might dictate it to your stenographer; probably I could recover most of it."

"Good. I have a stenotypist who can take it down as fast as you can repeat it."

So the next morning the *Daily Record* had the speech in full, word for word as Agesilaus had memorized it from the old educational journal.

It looked attractive in type, with his name at the top in thick black letters, and he bought a hundred copies to send to his friends.

VII

One of the marked copies went to the district superintendent, who came immediately to see Little Bok. "That was a fine address you delivered at the county association," he said.

"Did you like it?" asked Agesilaus modestly.

"Yes. It so happened that I heard it when it was first delivered thirty-three years ago. It pleased the audience greatly then."

Little Bok was dumbfounded. "You heard it?" he gasped.

"Yes. It was my first meeting of the State association."

"Is anybody else alive who heard it?"

"Yes, indeed, lots of people. Besides it was printed in the association proceedings, a thousand copies were sold in pamphlet form, and finally it was published with other addresses by the same author in a book called 'The rewards of teaching'. Here it is, the first address in the book. You have the book in your school library. It was not creditable to the audience that no one recognized the address."

VIII

Little Bok sank into a chair, limp. "Is there anything else for me except suicide?" he gasped.

"O yes: only cowards commit suicide. The thing for you to do is to confess."

"How?"

"Print a card in the *Daily Record*, telling the exact facts."

"I couldn't do that. I should be ashamed to look anybody in the face."

"You would be more worthy to look anybody in the face then than you are now."

"But the disgrace of it. I should feel that everybody was looking at me and talking about it."

"They would for a while. That is your punishment. You must outlive it."

"I never could do it. I would rather

resign and go where nobody knew me."

IX

"What would you do?"

"Teach school, I suppose."

"You couldn't without a certificate, and you could not get one without exposing your record here."

"Do you mean you are going to make this known?"

"If you do not confess I shall annul your certificate."

"That is harsh punishment. I am not the first one who has used other people's writing for his own."

"If you stole my pocketbook you would not be the first thief, but I should prosecute you."

"If you only knew how all my life I have longed to be listened to as I was Friday night, and what an exultation it was to be

able to play on an audience as you would on a piano. Why, there was a sour old maid over on the right just bound she wouldn't unloose her features, and I could look ahead and see just where I should make her shake with laughter."

Little Bok's eyes shone. He was sorry to be caught, but he was far from repenting that he had triumphed.

"If you had stolen my money you could have bought a very good dinner with it, but wouldn't you rather go hungry?"

"That is different. I should have deprived you of the money. In repeating his address I didn't deprive the author of anything; he died long ago, probably. At any rate he will never speak it again."

"I am not thinking of him, but of you. I am astonished to find this trait in your character. I should have said you were

as straight a man as I had in the district, and yet you not only stole from another man but are defending it."

X

"You can't guess what a longing I had for the power that I exercised Friday night."

"Do you suppose you are the only one who has a longing? My wife and I have had a longing all our lives for children of our own. We have never had them; we never can have them. A few minutes ago your little boy came in to ask a permission. He leaned up confidingly against your knee; your hand rested on his neck and your fingers played affectionately with his hair. You were not even conscious of it. For forty years I have longed for a child to caress like that, and yet you think it is an excuse for theft that you have not

been able to make an audience clap its hands. Do you suppose my longing would justify me in kidnapping your little boy, or even to borrow him and pass him off as my own? We all of us have longings we cannot satisfy, but we all have more than we deserve, and please God, keep us from coveting."

The district superintendent's voice trembled, and Little Bok knew the man who was talking with him was a real friend. "You are right," he said. "It was theft, and unpardonable. I am sorry for it, and I will never do it again. But must I confess to the public?"

XI

"It is your only salvation. In the first place the theft is sure to be discovered. There are twenty copies of this book in the school libraries of this district, and inevi-

tably some one will compare your newspaper copy with the original. Think how much better it is to confess than to be exposed."

"It was preposterous to let the *Record* print it, but that night I was beside myself with exultation. I even told the editor the address was extemporaneous."

"There is another danger. If you left the address believed to be yours you would have to live up to it. You can't always be repeating this one memorized speech, and when you are thrown on your own resources your talk will be more ponderous than ever because so much will be expected."

"I realize that. Already I have half a dozen invitations."

XII

"But these are only surface considerations. The main reason goes down to the

roots: you can't afford to live a lie."

"How live a lie?"

"Do you know George Eliot's Romola?"

"I have read it."

"Read it again; it is a great book. And this is its text: 'The contaminating effect of deeds often lies less in the commission than in the consequent adjustment of our desires—the enlistment of our self-interest on the side of falsity; as, on the other hand, the purifying influence of public confession springs from the fact that by it the hope in lies is forever swept away, and the soul recovers the noble attitude of simplicity.' "

" 'The hope in lies is forever swept away.' That appeals to me. I have told fifty lies about that address already. I won't tell another. That card shall be in the *Daily Record* tomorrow morning. But

it will be an awful punishment. The disgrace will never be lifted from me and my wife and my little boy."

"O yes it will. Henry Ward Beecher denied, and his sin is the one thing remembered of his really great life. Grover Cleveland telegraphed, 'Tell it all,' and you do not even recollect what the offence was."

XIII

In the next day's *Record* was this card in bold type:

To the public

The *Daily Record* of November 6 printed an address delivered by me the night previous as president of the County teachers association. I dictated it to the *Record* stenotyper; I told the editor that the speech was extemporaneous. This was a lie. The address was stolen and memorized.

It was originally delivered before the State teachers association thirty-three years ago. I found it in a stray number of an educational journal, I admired it, I tried to imitate it. When I was suddenly called upon to deliver the president's address I tried to prepare one, but my efforts were so unworthy that I despaired, and I yielded to the temptation to pass this speech off as my own. This is an explanation, not an excuse. There is no excuse. I stand convicted of an odious and unpardonable theft. My only hope is to live long enough to show that it is a blot on my career, not a characteristic.

Agesilaus Bok

XIV

The letter was the main talk of the county for a week. Strangely enough the public was less impressed with the

gravity of the offence than with the manliness of the confession. Little Bok offered his resignation to the board of education. It declined to accept it, but re-elected him for the coming year. He gave up his presidency of the county association, but at the next meeting he was re-elected to the office. What especially impressed him was that every one felt sympathetic. There was a more recognizable affection in the relations of others to him than he had found before. "Of course he shouldn't have done it," was the general feeling, "but how squarely he owned up to it. That's a man you can trust."

At the Biltmore

AT THE BILTMORE

I

On Saturday evening Gershom Keppell had been kept so long in committee that he missed his dinner engagement and had just about time for a 49th street *table d'hôte* at seventy-five cents, such as he used to indulge in when a student and his funds ran low. It amused him to recall the small portions, the reminiscent soup, the thin wine, the cooked-over aspect of the dishes. He passed the fish, remarking that he did not believe in so much transmigration of sole.

Presently he saw the head waiter directing the assembling of four tables for a party, and he speculated with languid

curiosity whether it would be a bridal feast. No such luck. In they came, ten women and one man, evidently a principal and his assistants. Hardly that; the man was meek, sat half way down the table, took orders instead of giving them. The manager was the kind of woman who always manages. She told each one where to sit and picked out the dishes from the menu. She arranged to substitute cocktails for the wine, and the waiter went up and down the table asking, "Manhattan or Martini?" Most of them chose at random, but one young woman said firmly, "Martini", and when the lighter glass was offered her pointed out the mistake, insisted on the other, and drank it at a gulp. Gershom was interested to see her eyes glow and her breath come fast: he had never seen a woman breathe just as she

did. But she kept control of herself, though with manifest effort.

Presently a belated twelfth came in from the train, carrying a dress-suit case which she shoved under the table at the place kept for her. Then she went up and down kissing each of the women, and when the man complained that he was neglected kissed him too, not to be dared. Altogether it was an interesing lot of people, bringing into a city dining-room the boisterousness of a country picnic.

II

For a time he saw them only as a group of western rural teachers come early to the N. E. A. and visiting New York for the first time. But presently he distinguished one from the rest who seemed out of place among them. She manifested no consciousness of it. She entered into the

whether he was one of the teachers the great convention had brought to the city. She thought he might be, for he had the face of a scholar as well as the bearing of a man used to command. She was flattered that he so evidently singled her out from her crowd. It ought to be easy enough but not every man would have done it so readily. Nor had she failed to recognize his admiration. "If we had met twenty years ago," she reflected, "we might have had something in common. Why is it that such men get snapped up so early by girls unable to appreciate them?"

But as he went out she mocked at herself. "He could see nothing much now in an old maid like me," she mused. "Besides, he is probably married and has half a dozen children." And she forgot him.

IV

On Monday evening there was a reception to the visiting teachers at the Biltmore, and as one of the officers Gershom felt obliged to go. It was a warm night, black clothes were burdensome, and he planned to retire as soon as decency permitted. He had gone down the receiving line, paid his respects to a dozen men and half as many women, and was edging toward the egress when a friend tapped him on the arm. "Miss Taine," she said, "let me present Mr. Keppell; you two ought to know each other." He turned indifferently, and there was his vision of the *table d'hôte*. As they recognized each other both smiled. "Kismet," cried Gershom.

"It does seem so," she laughed, in frank acknowledgement of having observed him.

He offered to get her an ice or a lemonade

but she protested and they strolled toward the dancing. As they went up the steps a couple vacated a little red sofa on the right, just out of the procession, and Gershom seized it. "Let us sit here and watch the crowd," he said.

"You are fond of watching," she remarked slyly.

"I usually get a good deal out of it," he replied significantly. "Did you ever see a teacher with so unbounded a waist?"

"Her waste has become profligacy."

"It reminds me of a cow we had that ate twenty-seven cabbages and swelled so she had to be slaughtered."

"Twenty-seven were too many even for her four stomachs."

"Yes. Her appetite failed to live up to its plans after it had adopted the specifications. That lady seems to grudge us this seat."

"Which one?"

"The one in blue, with something on below the waist."

"You are severe; remember what a warm night it is."

"She couldn't wear that gown at Coney Island."

"Or her Coney Island suit here: sufficient unto the place is the exposure thereof."

"It isn't a matter of low cut. With the same corsage we say of one, What a beautiful woman; of another, How much she shows."

"Doesn't it depend something on the mind of the beholder?"

"No, because both impressions are made on my mind."

"Your mind should be on the countenances."

"Poor Euphrosia. She cared so much for what money brings that it was a terrible blow when her father went bankrupt. Where is she now?"

"She devoted most of her attention to getting married, and succeeded."

"Married well?"

"Well to do, which seemed all she cared about. From all I know they get on fairly together.

V

"You are not teaching in Kraterhoff any longer, I take it?"

"No. For the last seven years I have been in a St. Louis high school, and in September I go to the Erasmus high."

"More salary, I suppose."

"Yes, but the inducement is a narrower field and chance for study at Columbia."

"Then teaching is all you see ahead?"

"I am fortunate to see that under such kindly auspices."

"Why haven't you married?"

"The threadbare reason: those who wanted me I didn't want and those I wanted didn't want me."

"I wish you wanted me."

"May be I do."

"Then I am yours."

"You mix the moods. I spoke in the potential."

"And I answered in the optative. If you would only be imperative and say 'Take me.' "

"That would sound implorative."

"I don't care what it is if you will say it."

"Careful. Some of these passers-by are listening, and I may make them my dictaphone."

"Give me leave and I will announce our

"It is only polite to observe what a woman makes conspicuous."

"In this crowd at least the faces are conspicuous."

"I think that is true. The waiters are looking at us condescendingly but I don't believe as distinguished a gathering has ever before assembled here."

"The women have strong faces, haven't they?"

"Strong and winning. It is every year more of a wonder to me that such fine women enter teaching, and still more that so many of them stay in it. Your friends of Saturday evening had good faces. Are they here tonight?"

"No, indeed. They came to New York with dress-suit cases. To go to a reception one must bring a wardrobe trunk."

"Who were they?"

"The teachers from Kraterhoff, Missouri, where I taught first; three of them are the same ones. They were kind to me when I began there, green from college."

"What was your college?"

"Vassar, nineteen three."

"Nineteen three: wasn't Euphrosia Gere in that class?"

"Yes. Do you know her?"

"When I became superintendent at Chicopee I found her among the new teachers. Did you like her?"

"I didn't know her very well. She was inclined to be exclusive. I am independent, so we did not coalesce. How was she as a teacher?"

"What she did not know about getting on with children would make a better textbook on school discipline than ever was written."

"Poor Euphrosia. She cared so much for what money brings that it was a terrible blow when her father went bankrupt. Where is she now?"

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"Careful. Some of these passers-by are listening, and I may make them my dictaphone."

"Give me leave and I will announce our

engagement to the entire company." And he started to rise.

She pulled him back. "I half believe you would," she gasped. "I shall begin to dream of Jack and the beanstalk and Cinderella."

"It's much easier nowadays. Why shouldn't we marry? Don't you want to be a wife?"

"Every woman wants to be a wife, if she can get the right husband, but she would rather marry nobody that a nobody."

"That's a challenge. Well, I am not quite a nobody, though of course I am nothing remarkable."

"O I know who you are, and you are quite distinguished enough. People would ask, 'How did he come to pick her up?'"

"Rather, 'How his luck stands by him.' Let's try it and see."

VI

"But why should we marry?"

"In the first place, I can support a wife."

"That is no reason. For that matter, I can support a husband if need be. That isn't what I am afraid of."

"What is?"

"That we should bore each other."

"Are you thinking of the husband who as they were entering the reception room begged his wife to be as little damned disagreeable as possible?"

"I wouldn't be so profane. I was thinking of the husband who was asked if his wife was entertaining this winter and who replied wearily, 'Not very.'"

"What a lot of such jokes there are."

"That is no joke, it is a tragedy, and it exists in half our homes."

"I suppose that is true. May be that

is just why I am so sure you are the right woman. I cannot imagine myself getting tired of conversing with you."

"And in six months you would be asking, 'Are you talking again or yet?' "

"No. In the first place I respect your intellect. I should know your opinion was as valuable as mine."

"Till we had gone our round. I know how it would be. For a time you would be curious. You would want to know what I had done and thought and you would ask a thousand questions to get at the woman's point of view. But presently the novelty would wear off, the little store of topics in which we were both interested would be exhausted, you would prefer your paper and your book, and presently your club, and we should be doing well if we maintained friendly relations."

"I think that happens to a great many couples, but I take it your experience has been practically as varied and as rich as mine, you have met as clever people, the way you are arguing shows that you are as thoughtful and as sensible and much brighter. I should consult you not from curiosity but because I valued your judgment, not to say your woman's intuition. Tonight, for instance, I dread parting from you. I shall walk home with you if you will let me, and I shall hope your hotel is two miles off. I am not accustomed to feel this way. You have aroused in me an interest I do not have in any one else in the world."

"The interest would last till the cup was drained."

"We should not be draining a cup: we should be quaffing from an exhaustless

spring. Think of the mutual interests marriage would bring; what it would mean to us who have boarded all our lives to furnish our own home."

VII

"Our own home;" she repeated the words mockingly, and yet she recognized in her own accent just a bit of longing.

"Yes. We shouldn't build at first, because we should have to live together a while to find out just what we want, but we would own our house from the start. What an interest that would be, to find the good neighborhood, the sunny exposure, the deep yard—"

"And plenty of closets."

"Yes, when we put up a house we will have shelves built into the partitions."

"And you have the purse of Fortunatus for all this?"

"I have always saved, and there is no better investment than one's own home. We can put considerable into it, taking care to buy what will sell when we are ready to erect our dreams in stone. Then we must furnish our rented house."

"We may quarrel there."

"That won't be getting bored. Besides, the two sets of attire I have seen you wear give me confidence in your taste."

"Say in my dressmaker's taste: shall we consult her?"

"No dressmaker does your planning: I can see that. What a lovely idea to have just the hint of a tinge in that ribbon, relieving the white without staining it."

"Dear me, a man sees that? It was just my thought but I did not hope to have it interpreted."

"You see how fitted we are to each other.

Now suppose our home is selected, think what a joy it will be to pick up the furniture for it."

"On the installment plan?"

"In a way, yes. We will purchase only the essentials at first and for the important pieces keep our eyes open, buying a bureau here, a table there, as opportunity presents, indulging in extravagances and making up for them by enonomies, so that every piece shall be bought for all time and shall have its story and its associations."

"That sounds attractive."

"I already have the dining-room chairs stored away in my aunt's attic. There was a sale in an old mansion to be dismantled, and twelve carved oak Russian-leather-seated chairs were offered. They were made for the New York exhibition of 1851,

and were bought at that time for fifty dollars apiece. The carving on every chair is different, and they are as solid as the day they were made."

"And you paid six hundred dollars for dining room chairs!"

"Dear me, no; I paid seven dollars apiece, and I thought I could afford to anticipate. That is the sort of joy we shall have, taking our time, buying when people want to sell, and pointing to every article as a triumph."

VIII

"It certainly sounds interesting. When you are married and furnished ask your wife to invite me to see your treasures."

"Let us take off the chintz covers, as Mérimée says, and talk heart to heart. Honestly I want to marry you."

"Do you say that to every woman during your first half hour?"

"I never said it to any woman before, but I don't find any of my dreams lacking in you."

"Seems to me I have read somewhere in books that love isn't a bad thing in marriage. We haven't mentioned that."

"What is love? I said to myself Saturday night, 'That is the woman I should have married if I had met her.' "

"And if she would have had me, I hope you added. But I suppose you didn't. A man always thinks he has only to throw his handkerchief."

"No, I was humble enough. I would have sought you out then, only it seemed to me that at my age I had so little to offer."

"Age doesn't matter much in a man,

but I am thirty-five years old. Nobody wants to marry a woman thirty-five years old."

"One man wants it above anything else in the world. A young girl would be as unsuited to me as I should be to her. I want a rich, cultured, experienced, thoughtful woman, whose judgment I can trust and whose companionship I shall never tire of."

"You are like a sophomore in his first love, spicing up a water-melon rind with condiments from your own imagination."

"No. As a teacher I have learned to recognize the characteristics of a true woman, and never before have I seen them so combined as in you."

" 'But thou art no such perfect thing.
Rejoice that thou art not.' "

"Poor Wordsworth."

"Poor Mrs. Wordsworth. To be honest, all women like superlatives, absurd as they may be."

"Then make my happiness superlative by marrying me."

"I wonder what this passing throng thinks of the little snatches of our conversation that reaches it. Surely never before was there wooing in the midst of five thousand people."

"Let us establish a precedent. Be the first woman that ever was won in the midst of five thousand people."

"I do not know why I should doubt your sincerity, or deny that it appeals to me. Of course there must be acquaintance and reflection, but if tomorrow you still want to know me I shall be glad to remember this conversation, singular as it is in place and circumstance."

"I am sure you see I have meant every word I said."

"Yes, that is what I have appreciated most, that you have thought it worth while to take me seriously and give me your best. A woman gets so weary of being talked down to."

"Then we will give up our little sofa that so many have grudged us. May I see you to your hotel?"

IX

Mrs. William Horsely Taine
invites you to the marriage of her niece
Honora Taine
to Mr Gershom Keppell
at Orangeville, New York
on Monday, August twenty-eighth
nineteen hundred sixteen
at twelve, noon

THE SCIENTIFIC SPIRIT

THE SCIENTIFIC SPIRIT

I

Mr. Kobell made a good start and had the school well in hand. He liked his pupils, his teachers, the community. The salary made him for the first time financially comfortable. He felt about him the atmosphere of contentment.

Of a sudden this was disturbed. One day he had an impression of being followed. It was absurd, of course. No one needed to spy on him. One of his earliest lessons from his father had been to do nothing he had to cover up, and his life had been singularly open. An uncle had told at the table of a man with a heavy mustache on shipboard who took occasion when rough

weather kept ladies from the table to order thick soup, and he had always remembered the contempt the two brothers expressed, not because it was a crime not to eat from the side of the spoon but because the man had two sets of manners, one for ladies and one for himself. Mr. Kobell would not have thrust the end of his spoon into his mouth if he had been Robinson Crusoe; he would have manicured his nails as carefully if he had never expected to see another human being.

If he was so scrupulous in manners, much more scrupulous was he in morals. In money transactions not only was he exact but he always insisted on proof of exactness. He paid all but his trifling purchases by check, and for all but the smallest he took receipt. If he was trust-

ed with money he had a memorandum of the amount made and signed.

In other relations he was equally above reproach. He was prompt in all social duties. Invitations were immediately acknowledged, and required calls were made on time. He was courteous to all, but the occasional girl who tried to compromise him found him wary and if need be frank. He had been for some years considered a good catch, but mothers had angled for him in vain. His relations with young women were not only above reproach but openly and manifestly above reproach; he could always prove that he had not committed himself or them.

All this not only seemed so but was so. He had his personal failings, but they were not of a kind that involved others or that

others could complain of. So why should he be shadowed?

II

Yet he was. He discovered it first not by what he saw but by what he felt. There was an impression upon him that somebody was trailing him. He could not shake if off and he began to observe. Presently evidences began to appear. One Saturday afternoon he went walking. When he got half a mile away from the village another man came along the road after him. It was nobody he knew and yet the feeling was conviction that the purpose was to spy upon him. To determine it, when presently he came to a difficult road through a swamp, seldom followed, he took it. The man took the road, and closed up somewhat on him. Mr. Kobell stopped, waiting for the man to come up. The

man stopped too, at a distance too far away to be hailed. Mr. Kobell turned to walk back toward the man. The man turned and retraced his steps, still keeping approximately the same inaccessible distance. Rather than be balked Mr. Kobell sacrificed his dignity and ran after the stranger. The man ran too, and ran faster, managing to lose himself in the village without attracting attention.

III

The more Mr. Kobell thought it over the more he was disturbed. He tried another experiment. The trains to and from Ipswich met at the station. The next Saturday he ostentatiously bought a ticket for Ipswich and got on the train, but before it started changed to the other train and stopped at Dougherty Falls, a little station where they did not even sell

tickets. When he got off another man got off too. Sure it was to follow him, Mr. Kobell accosted him pleasantly, asked as to his business, inquired which way he was going, and when the man started went himself in the opposite direction. By walking ten miles across country he could take a trolley home, and this he did. When he got upon the car the only vacant seat was with the man who had got off at the Falls, and who explained that he had not found the person he was looking for and had been obliged to go out of his way. Mr. Kobell had not the slightest doubt the stranger had kept him in sight all the afternoon.

It was not the same man who had followed him the preceding Saturday. Apparently whoever was watching him was doing so by proxies, changing them but

seeing to it there was always someone. So as he sat in school it might be any one of the pupils; in church it might be any one of the congregation. The impossible thing was to be where eyes were not looking at him.

IV

He grew to spending more and more of his time in the office, even then keeping the key in the keyhole so that no one could peek in. One day a belated mosquito bothered him and he took some pains to kill it, finally landing his fist upon a partition that had been put up at the end of the office to make a coat-room for the high school teachers, reached from the hall. It was a dark little room, not much used at this season. As he struck the partition he heard something drop into the cloak-room, and when he went around to look

he found a piece of board that had been neatly scooped out, a cone with a broad base. It had been held in place by a thin paste, enough to fasten it under usual conditions but permitting it to be easily removed. When out of place as now it left a little hole through which an eye placed close could see every part of the office.

Mr. Kobell examined this cone closely. It had been skilfully cut, with a sharp tool, by accustomed hands. Whoever was spying upon him had ability and resources. The matter had become serious.

V

That night he happened to glance up and saw a face peering through the window of his room. He ran to the door, but the person had disappeared. Under pretence of redecorating the room he bought dark green shades that filled the windows en-

tirely, and saw that they were pulled to the bottom. In the morning as he rolled them up he noticed that the threads in the corner of one had been pulled apart enough to be seen through. He had flattered himself all the evening that he was out of vision, but a man standing outside could have witnessed every motion he made. Who could have separated those threads, and when? It was becoming uncanny.

The next night he placed a rocking-chair with a solid back so as to shut off the view through this hole in the curtain, and was relieved to find that no other had been made. At last he had outwitted his enemy. For some nights he felt that he had achieved solitude, but one evening another boarder had company and the hall was lit. Mr. Kobell went to bed

before the guests departed, and when he turned off the burner he saw a pencil of light coming in from the hall. Investigating he discovered that a tiny cylinder had been drilled through the door, and any one in the hall could by kneeling see his entire room.

VI

He was now so disturbed that he changed boarding-places. He got a second floor with no balcony, where to look through his windows one must mount a ladder, and he hung before his door a heavy rug, not unlike those in an Italian church, with many thicknesses. Now at least he was secure from observation, and his sense of comfort made him realize what an annoyance his consciousness of surveillance had been.

One morning as he lay looking idly at

the ceiling, papered in white sprinkled with gold stars, he observed that in the centre of one of the stars there was a tiny hole. He rose, mounted by moving a bureau, thrust a broom corn through so as to find the place, and went up stairs.

He found a big, unfurnished attic, boards laid loosely for a floor. Where the broom corn came through, the plaster was scraped out around the little hole, so that when he knelt and put his eye down close he could see the entire room. There was no longer any use to contend against malignity like this, and he resigned himself to his fate.

VII

For not one clue had he been able to get as to who or how or why. Apparently many different people were involved, under a guiding hand, perhaps not always aware of why they were to do what was asked

of them. It was like the story of the inquisition where the cell had an aperture through which an eye was always peering, sometimes a man's eye, sometimes an indistinguishable glass eye, but always the eye was there, and it was said the punishment was less endurable than as though the prisoner had known that the eye was always human.

But just when a solution of the mystery seemed most hopeless, one night Mr. Kobell heard a board in the attic tip and fall back, a foot having trodden upon it on end. He slipped into the dark hall, waited for the intruder to descend, and caught a boy sneaking down stairs. The boy struggled recklessly and with surprising strength, but Mr. Kobell was not a weak man and he forced the boy into his room. When he turned on the light he found that he

had captured Miranda Mott, his science teacher.

VIII

When Mr. Kobell first came to Councilboro, a day before school opened, he learned that the teacher of science had resigned to become instructor in biology in her own college, and the chairman of the teachers committee, Mr. Solander, called him into conference as to her successor. "Of course it must be a woman," Mr. Solander began.

"Personally I should prefer a man for science work," Mr. Kobell suggested.

"Unfortunately eight hundred dollars won't get much of a man, while it will secure a very good woman."

"We can get a young fellow just out of college for that."

"And have our pupils among his hatful of eyes?"

"He would make mistakes, but he would have energy and the fertility that accompanies soil newly turned over. I was out of college two spring terms teaching. The second I taught chemistry in a normal school. When I began I did not know that muriatic and hydrochloric acid were the same, or that ammonia would restore the blue in trousers, but my classes would stay till night and all day Saturday if I would let them, and we really did good work."

"The normal school took a chance on you and won out, but not one in twenty who graduates from college is fit to teach, and I would rather some other school did the experimenting. We can get a woman who is a sure thing."

IX

"I don't think women ought to teach science."

"We have always had our sciences taught by women and our regents results are the highest in the country."

"Women can teach what there is in the book, but they haven't the scientific spirit, and cannot impart it."

"What do you mean by the scientific spirit?"

"The spirit of observation and record and inquiry. Women take the textbook as final. My great-grandfather studied physics at Yale from a "Natural philosophy". I have his book. It says on page 141 that heat comes from phlogiston, a physical substance. If science had been taught only by women the textbooks would say so today."

"How would it have made a difference?"

"Women would have been satisfied to teach what they had been taught. All the great discoveries have been made by men."

"How about Madame Curie?"

"Her exception proves the rule, for every one names her. But it was her husband who discovered radium, and I have not learned that her own contributions, even after she was started in the path of investigation by him, have been momentous. Caroline Herschel assisted her brother, Maria Mitchell lectured interestingly on astronomy, but what new theories came from either?"

"You think the feminine mind is incapable of original investigation?"

"That is not its natural activity. It accepts and applies and does it well, but

it does not initiate, it does not closely question. Before it examines a flower it looks in the book to see what it is to find."

"Don't men do the same?"

"Some of them. For a hundred years medical students had dissected with the book before them. It occurred to a Johns Hopkins professor to set his pupils at work upon a cadaver with only a notebook and let them write down what they found. Within a year it was discovered that instead of all men having twenty-four ribs, a fifth had more or fewer. When the text said, find twenty-four ribs, the dissector found them. When the instructor said, find how many there are, the dissector often found twenty-six or twenty-two. That is the scientific spirit, the unprejudiced discovering of what is, no matter what the book says

there ought to be. To impart that spirit we must have a man teacher."

X

"Mr. Kobell, you remind me of a niece of mine who has just that spirit. Her father would have been a noted physician if he had lived, but he took too many chances and caught a contagious disease. My sister mourned so over his death that she soon followed, and little Miranda was brought up by her father's sister, a well-bred woman but a militant suffragist whom I can't abide, so I have seen very little of the child. But she always had what you call the scientific spirit. She shook the sawdust out of her first doll in five minutes, and before she was seven she had taken apart the old grandfather's clock."

"Did she put it together again?"

"Not so that it would go, but before she was eight she had found out how to pull out the reeds of the cabinet organ and clean them if any note did not play, and was in some ways really handy about the house. But she was always experimenting and her aunt never knew where anything was or in what stage of metamorphosis."

"How about animals?"

"She was fond of them and had remarkable power to catch and keep them. She could outrun, outclimb, outswim, outdare any boy in the neighborhood, and she always had scores of pets, not only kittens and dogs, usually two or three of each, but rabbits and doves and crows and hawks. She was especially devoted to snakes, and usually had a dozen in captivity."

"Was she kind to animals?"

"Usually, but if she wanted to discover

anything about any of them there was no limit to the suffering she would cause them. As a mite of a thing she would pull off a fly's leg or wing and put it under glass to see whether it could grow another one in place, or how it got on without. She would feed a mouse to a snake and watch the little creature quiver with fear. She had a kitten she was especially fond of, but when it had to be done away with she insisted on killing it herself, and took a scientific interest in its death struggles. She always wanted to know, and she shrank from nothing that would tell her."

"I do not know that I object to that so long as it is not wanton cruelty. She killed the kitten more kindly than a disinterested person would, no doubt, and what she learned might sometime be of use."

"But where was her affection for the kitten? It should have absorbed her, so that she would have had no thought to give to scientific curiosity. She seemed to have no heart."

"I don't know that grief should exclude observation. I never saw but one person die. That was my little brother, still an infant, and I was ten years old. The scene has always been vivid to me. I stood with my parents about the cradle, and I recollect that the instant of death was shown by the creeping of a film up his eyeballs. Whenever death is mentioned I see that film creeping up. He was my brother and I grieved for him, but I had the scientific spirit to observe and remember the phenomena of death."

"But you had nothing to do with causing your brother's death; you would not

have had him die for the sake of knowing what the phenomena of death were. Now Miranda creates much of the suffering she observes. She will perform an experiment upon an animal to judge from its sufferings what the effect is."

"You talk like an anti-vivisectionist. These experiments on beasts are necessary to learn how to save human life."

"Possibly, in medical education. But Miranda wants knowledge for its own sake and experiments on everything."

XI

"Where was your niece educated?"

"Vassar first; then a year in the Johns Hopkins medical college. She planned to become a physician, but decided that women do not have an equal show in practice. So she dropped out, and has been teaching in her home school."

"Science, I suppose."

"Yes, and quite successfully I am told; I had a talk with her principal this summer. But there is only a small equipment there, so she is cramped."

"Do you suppose she could get released?"

"O yes. She is teaching at a low salary with that proviso. You are not thinking of asking her to come here?"

"From what you say I think she is just the woman we want. You needn't worry over her scientific spirit, if she really has it."

"Of course I should like to have her here, if she will come without her aunt. If you think best I will telegraph for her."

XII

Miss Mott proved to be not at all what Mr. Kobell had pictured her. She was below medium size, graciously friendly

in manner, quick and bright in conversation, without a hint of the blue-stocking or the scientist. She knew her pupils by their first names before the end of the initial recitations, and by the close of the term there were half a dozen homes where she could drop in to any meal uninvited and be welcome. She had a way of getting at people and making them like her and feel cordial toward her. Faces lit up when she approached.

Yet she certainly had the scientific spirit. She carried on an enormous amount of laboratory work, and made so much more use of notebooks than of textbooks that Mr. Kobell had his doubts about the January regents. The results surprised him. The more difficult the question the better average the classes showed. They were especially strong in the mathemati-

cal problems. They could calculate the ohms and the dynes and the poundals with exactness and certainty.

He found too that she did not confine class work to the day's lesson. Anything that came up and interested the class she was ready to discuss, especially anything that required an explanation. She taught her pupils to think, and sent them home poring over questions that surprised and sometimes appalled their parents. Her pupils never found a recitation too long. If it came the last in the afternoon they would sometimes ask when the bell rang, "Do we need go yet?"

XIII

And this successful, popular teacher was alone in his room at nine o'clock, dress- as a boy so far as she was dressed at all after the scuffle, caught in effect burglar-

izing. When he recognized her, he looked her full in the face, and asked, "Well?"

She looked him just as fully in the face, and repeated, "Well?"

"I suppose you have some explanation," he suggested.

"Certainly: a mere scientific experiment."

"Indeed. And the topic?"

"I wanted to study the effect of spying upon a man with nothing to conceal."

"I being the man?"

"Yes. You seemed to me the most complacent man I had ever met."

"Conceited, I suppose you mean."

"No," she replied discriminatingly. "The gradation is contented, complacent, conceited. Complacent is only consciously contented. Conceited is ostentatiously and offensively self-satisfied."

On the brink of state prison, and yet she could split hairs as though nothing in the world mattered except distinguishing synonyms.

"You are nearer contented than conceited," she added, "but you are complacent."

"And you wanted to spy me out of it?"

"I wanted to see whether spying would scare you out of it. Theoretically, if a man has nothing to conceal he need not mind being spied upon; practically, I was sure it would make you uneasy."

"What right had you to make me uneasy?"

"There must be experiments or there could be no scientific progress."

"Then if you thought you had discovered the germs of infantile paralysis you wouldn't mind trying them on me?"

"I shouldn't go so far as that. The

experiment I have tried is really a compliment to you. There may be other men with as open a record as yours but I don't expect to meet one. Hence my only chance was with you."

"You have certainly been bold."

"Not so very. I run in and out of all these houses. I easily found opportunity to spread the threads in your green shade and to bore the hole in the door. This house I visit often, and had no difficulty in finding a chance to slip into the attic. Tonight Mrs. Filer has gone to a sewing circle and the maid is out. At this instant you and I are the only persons in the house. If my flash-light had not given out and the board tipped, I should have been at home ten minutes ago, and you would have got a typewritten slip telling what you were doing at eight-fifteen."

"How much further were you meaning to carry your exeriments?"

"Considerably. You have stood them pretty well so far. You have been annoyed but you have not been made doubtful of yourself. What I want to know is whether spying will make a man conscious of guilt he has never committed."

"Then you meant to continue till I was driven to be morose or insane?"

"If spying will do it, or to be convinced that spying will not do it."

XIV

"You will have a new experiment to consider now."

"What is that?"

"The problem what a man does with a woman he detects in her shameless plotting against his happiness."

"That is no problem."

"Why not?"

"I know what you will do. When I was a child I used to argue with my aunt as to the omnipotence of God. Can He be untrue to Himself, I used to ask, and when she said no, then I said He was more limited than any of His creatures, for the rest of us could. You are not God, but you are of so high a type of man that you cannot be untrue to yourself, so it is easy to see what you will do."

"What is it?"

"First, you will get me safely out of the house, seeing me to the door at a time when nobody will observe me, and walking near enough home with me so that I cannot be annoyed. Then you will forget it."

XV

"Now let me guess. The question is which I shall ring for to come here, the chief of police or your uncle."

"You make me smile, Mr. Kobell. You could not even contemplate either one. If you think you could, I know you better than you know yourself. My uncle told me of your conversation about the scientific spirit. That is what I have manifested, and you should be the last to blame me for that."

"I think it will be simplest to telephone for the chief of police directly."

"I should like to keep this discussion on an altruistic plane, Mr. Kobell, but before you lift the receiver it might be well for you to consider what will follow if the chief of police finds one of your teachers here partly dressed in boy's clothes at nine o'clock at night."

"Are you trying to blackmail me?"

"Not at all; I am only pointing out to

you a view of the situation that seems to have escaped you."

"It is not my fault that you are in my room."

"You certainly would not intimate that I came in here voluntarily;" and she looked significantly at her torn coat.

"I pulled you in here because I supposed you to be a burglar."

"That is true. You know it and I know it. I don't think my uncle would believe it. I know the chief of police would not believe it. You would see headlines in all the newspapers, 'Woman teacher found partly dressed in boys clothes in principal's room at nine o'clock at night'."

"When you are tried for entering a house feloniously the facts will come out."

"If by any chance you should bring suit it would be months before the trial, and

meantime the salacious story would have gone all over the state. The fact that I am here cannot be denied. The explanation of it let him believe who will."

"You seem to enjoy the situation."

"I admit it is interesting. Nothing could be farther from the truth than what every one would infer, and yet if it becomes known to a human being that I am here as I am, irreparable harm will be done to me, to you, to the school, and to the profession of teaching."

"I suppose there is some truth in that. I will see that you get home as you propose, and we will discuss afterward what shall be done about it. We had better go at once, before my landlady gets back."

XVI

The next morning after opening exercises he called her into the office. "It

would be better to resign at once," he said. "You can make some excuse, and I will see that it is accepted."

"Resign? I haven't the remotest idea of resigning," she replied.

"You belong in state prison," he replied rather hotly, "and you should be more than satisfied that I permit you to resign."

"I thought you were convinced last night that there must be no publicity."

"I do not want publicity, but I do not want a burglar in my school as a teacher."

"I am not a burglar. A burglar is a man who steals. I have stolen nothing."

"You were stealing more than money or jewelry; you were purposely stealing peace of mind, by felonious means."

"You are stopped from proving it, as we agreed last night. The only thing left for you to do now is to forget it. For one

thing, you could not make any one believe I was there. If you had called the chief of police then and he had seen me that would be one thing. For you to say I was there is quite another."

"Then you positively refuse to resign?"

"Absolutely. It is absurd even to think of it. But it may be some satisfaction to you that I am through spying upon you. That is no longer necessary. What is more, you are no longer a proper subject. You are now a man who has something to conceal, and who has to conceal it. You are still an object of study, but in a new role. I shall watch you now to see how a man with something to conceal covers it up. But I shan't have to spy on you to discover. You will show it all the time."

"Are you really human, or are you a female Mephistopheles?"

"Now the scientific spirit is aroused in you. Watch me and see. You may even spy on me if you like, and I will not bluster about sending you to prison for it."

Two women's tongues

TWO WOMEN'S TONGUES

I

"I really couldn't tell you, m'um. The wreckin' train ain't gone by yet. It must be five or six hours anyway."

It was most annoying. Miss Applegate was not an adaptable person. She was so accustomed to choosing the line of least resistance that any knot in it jarred her. She had planned to get dinner at her own boarding-place, and here she was twenty miles from it, train off the track, too far to walk, too costly to hire a conveyance. She considered herself an abused person.

She had not thought anything could add to her discomfort, but there was something and it added. When the eastern

train came in, Miss Littrow got off. She was another teacher at Atherton, like Miss Applegate expecting to find a train north. The two had taught together nine years, and every year had liked each other less. They met civilly, but each avoided the other and the other knew it. Now they were thrown into enforced companionship for an afternoon.

II

Luckily they had a common need. It was after twelve and they must get something to eat. There was no hotel. The station was solitary, no building within a furlong. "Is there any one near here who serves meals?" asked Miss Littrow of the station agent.

He took off his hat and scratched his head. "There ain't many that wants meals here," he said, "but sometimes Miss

Speke gits up suthin'. You cross the bridge an' turn to the lef' an' 'bout 'arf a mile on you'll see a house with new clapboards on that ain't painted. That's her'n."

The two teachers followed directions. "Why, yes," the woman said with hearty welcome; "come right in." She served a wholesome farmer's dinner promptly and acceptably and charged them only half what they expected, so they came away cheered and more favorably disposed toward each other than either would have thought possible. It was a hot day, and instead of sitting in the station they went over to a woods near by, the agent assuring them the train would whistle a mile below, after which there would be plenty of time to get back to the station.

III

They found comfortable seats under the trees, and as neither happened to have

reading matter along they settled themselves for an afternoon talk, some mutual curiosity having already developed.

"Yes," Miss Applegate acknowledged, "he says I can't stay another year. He discussed my case as scientifically and cold-bloodedly as if I had been a devil's paint-brush that ought to be hoed up. He said I was probably a fair aveage teacher when I began, and if I had married in a year or two as I of course wanted to I should probably have made a fair average wife and mother. But that when I found I wasn't going to get married and should have to keep on teaching, the cat part of my nature developed, and I began to look for soft corners where I could lie undisturbed. If a boy was anything out of the ordinary it annoyed me, and instead of studying him I tried to get rid of him. I didn't

want any new ideas and I avoided any work I could get out of. In short I was a weed in the school garden, and must be uprooted. This was absolutely my last year."

"The impudence of it," sympathized Miss Littrow, "when you've been here a dozen years."

"And might have been here a dozen more under any other principal. No other man has complained of my work. I lack three years of my twenty-five for a pension, and if I am turned out here there won't be the least use of trying to get another place."

"I am exactly in the same fix," confessed Miss Littrow. "The principal at the normal told me when I came here that it was my last chance."

"Why, has Mr. Romney given you warning, too?"

"Rather. He talked to me a good deal worse than he did to you."

"What did he say?"

"The meanest things. He said I was by nature discontented, envious, and a mischief-maker. He doubted whether he ought to let me finish the year, but out of respect for my nine years service here and my age—the impudence of him—he would let me stay till June."

"No use to appeal to the board, of course."

"No, they swear by him. I heard the president say to the secretary that this is the first year since he has been on the board that he has felt everything could be safely left to the principal."

"Then what is to become of us? I haven't a hundred dollars in the world."

IV

"I haven't a great deal, nothing like enough to live on. Our only hope is to get rid of Mr. Romney before the board elects."

"How can we get rid of him? He grows stronger every day."

"What if we could get his character under suspicion?"

"Is there some hidden chapter in his history?"

"No. I looked that up when I saw he wasn't going to like me. His record is clean."

"Then how are we going to hurt him?"

"Start up some scandal about him."

"How can we do that, with no basis?"

"Miss Applegate, how far are you game?"

"What do you mean?"

"If I show you how we can drive him out of this school and save our places and our pensions, will you stand by me and carry it through?"

"Shan't we get into trouble ourselves?"

"No. On the contrary we shall seem to everybody to be the only ones who are loyal to him. I have thought it all out."

V

"Explain."

"This is on the dead level. Cross your heart."

"Of course."

"You know how fond he is of Marcella Ticknor?"

"Why, he is trying to get a state scholarship for her so that she can go to college."

"Yes, that is really all there is of it, and

yet if you will stand by me we can drive him out of town."

"Why, Charity Littrow, what do you mean?"

"You know he stays after school with her almost every day till five and sometimes six o'clock."

"Yes, but always in the big room, with the door wide open."

"But nobody there; the janitor often goes away."

"He isn't that kind of a man."

"That will make no difference if we get people to suspecting."

"And she is a thoroughly good girl."

"No doubt. They will blame him all the more."

"But how is the story to be started?"

"I'll tell you. I couldn't do it alone and you couldn't, but together we can

manage it beautifully. You know everybody in the Presbyterian church; I know everybody in the Methodist. That means the whole village. Be on the lookout for a time when two or three of your worst gossips are together, and if possible wait till somebody speaks of Mr. Romney: you don't want to seem to be lugging it in. Watch for your chance and speak up warmly for Mr. Romney, saying it is a shame that people should start stories about him. The gossips will be crazy to know there is any scandal they haven't had a chance to spread, and the more reluctant you are to tell the more determined they will be to worm it out of you. Mention no names, but just let it be extorted that you have heard that people were saying he couldn't be staying with Marcella night after night for any good purpose,

and the rest will take care of itself. I will do the same in my church, and the whole village will be astir."

"But they will both deny it."

"What good will that do them? People are only too ready to believe the worst of others, especially in that relation. Once couple the names of a married man and a young girl and suspicion will always hang over them."

"Suppose we get found out."

"For what? We haven't said anything except that the story isn't true. We are going to get lots of credit for standing by the principal. Before he leaves town he will probably come to thank us for being his only friends."

"Have we a right to ruin his career?"

"It won't ruin him. Men have so many ways to earn a living. Turn us out and

we are two helpless old maids. Turn him out and he will start a teachers agency."

"And Marcella?"

"It will cloud her name a little for a while, but she is young and after she goes to college nobody will remember it."

"It doesn't seem right to injure them both by a false charge."

"Adalina Applegate, every animal has its weapon of defence. A woman's is her tongue. If we were starting this story wantonly, just to make trouble, it would be unpardonable. But we are doing it to save our places and our pensions: it is the only way we can have anything to live on in our old age. We are simply availing ourselves of our one weapon."

"It seems to me mightily like the skunk's."

"The skunk has a right to live. It has

beautiful fur, and farmers are learning that it is a useful animal. Yet except for the weapon it gets from God it would be extinct."

"I must say I don't like to go into this, Charity."

"Still less do you want to die in the poorhouse, Adalina; and the choice is between them."

"Are you sure we shan't get caught?"

"How can we, unless we betray each other?"

"Of course I wouldn't do that."

"I should think not: you couldn't afford to, for we must sink or swim together. Are you in it with me?"

There was more argument, but Miss Littrow's stronger mind consciously bore down upon Miss Applegate's, and before the train arrived the agreement was made.

Miss Littrow took care to provide that the first dissemination of the rumor should be by Miss Applegate.

VI

Marcella Ticknor was an orphan whom a second cousin had allowed to live with her by helping in the family. At the beginning of the school year she was hoping to graduate in June and teach a rural school on an academic certificate. She had it dimly in mind that sometime she might exchange it for a rural renewable, but her dreams of old age were of keeping a district school till she could retire on a pension. "I am not the kind of girl boys care for," she had concluded before she reached her teens.

To Mr. Romney she seemed at first so hopeless that he did not think she could be graduated this year. Had not the

general standard of the school been low he would have dropped her into the junior class. Her scholarship was ragged, and she had no hold of fundamentals, such as the inevitableness of a geometry demonstration or the structure of a Latin sentence.

But when she read her first composition he thought she must have copied it. In fact he was so indignant that he questioned her on it before the class, expecting to demonstrate that she did not even comprehend what she had written. To his astonishment she showed that her work was only the fringe of her thought, and went on to develop the subject with a grasp that amazed him. He kept her after school and talked with her. He had stumbled upon a prize, a girl with capacity that resembled genius.

Of course she must go to college. She had made herself so useful and competent in her cousin's family that it would be comparatively easy to find a like boarding-place, and Mr. Romney had friends who would be glad to furnish the money for clothing and incidental expenses. There was only the tuition to provide for, and that the new scholarship law would supply if at the June regents examinations she could rank among the first five in the assembly district.

That was not easy to secure. She would have to be put through a thorough drill in the review, as well as trained in the subjects of the year. Practically she would have to do double work herself, and she would have to have double teaching. He put the case before her. "I will under-

take the teaching," he said, "if you will do the home work."

She grasped at the opportunity, rising to the new conception that he inspired of her possibilities. There would be no trouble about her English or her history, but her algebra, her geometry, and her Latin must be rebuilt. Mr. Romney undertook it, the more willingly because there was no other pupil in school who had a possibility of winning a scholarship. So they stayed together after school, always half an hour, sometimes twice or three times that. Both felt proud of what they were accomplishing.

VII

On Saturday afternoon Marcella went out to the woods for spring flowers, glad of the warm sunshine which seemed to develop her career as well as the blossoms.

Aurelia Krupp, the greediest gossip in the village, saw her go and followed her, planning to gain her confidence and find out what there was to the Romney story. Marcella would rather have been alone, but she was too happy to refuse companionship and she talked freely of her prospects. "Mr. Romney is so kind and patient," she said.

"And so fond of you," suggested Aurelia.

Marcella had never thought of that. Mr. Romney was doing a great deal for her, for her sake and the sake of the school, but she had never thought there was personal liking behind it. In fact she had got out of the way of looking for personal liking. Her cousin gave her a place to eat and sleep and allowed her to sit at the table, but really looked at her as rather a

servant than a relative, and she was used to being snubbed everywhere. Till Mr. Romney had encouraged her she felt like apologizing for being alive, and hoped only to get through the world without being conspicuously in other people's way. Now she had learned to look for something more in the way of a career, but she thought of it only as the work she could do; it had not occurred to her that any one would feel affection for her. So Aurelia's suggestion flattered her and was welcome. She even blushed, as Aurelia was quick to observe. "Do you really think so?" she asked.

Aurelia smiled complacently: this was going to be a profitable afternoon. "There can be no doubt of that," she replied. "Is it possible that you are the last to see it?"

"I hope I am becoming less stupid and ignorant than he found me," said Marcella, "but I am still very crude. I am glad if he thinks all his work is not thrown away."

"He doesn't think of you any more as a pupil," insinuated Aurelia archly. "He is in love with you."

"Why, Aurelia Krupp," exclamed Marcella indignantly, "you ought to be ashamed to say such a thing. And he a married man."

"With a wife who was his equal when he married her but who hasn't grown with him and is no companion for him and has borne him no children and is an invalid."

"And whom he loves with chivalrous devotion."

"From a sense of duty. He is a high-minded man, Marcella, no doubt trying

to be true to his wife and to be wholly honorable in his relations to you, but everybody in the village knows his only real happiness is in your company."

"Aurelia Krupp, I am ashamed of you and I will not listen to you another instant. You may stay here and I will go, or I will stay here and you may go."

And when Aurelia only laughed and sat down, Marcella almost ran home, more unhappy than ever before in her life.

VIII

For she feared there was some truth in Aurelia's assertion. It was revealed in a flash but it explained so much. Mr. Romney had never offered a sign of affection or a suggestion of any other relation than that of pupil and teacher. He had never put his hand upon her shoulder or let it touch hers. In all their intercouse

he had never shaken hands with her or uttered a tender word. In all the hours they had stayed after school there had not been a sentence or a gesture that would have been different had the whole school been in its seats.

And yet. How had he been so quick to recognize her first compositions? Why did he so enjoy discussion with her? Why did so many of her ideas seem fresh to him and always interesting? Why was he so eager to begin their afternoon lessons, so reluctant to terminate them?

Of course to her all this intercourse had been like a gift from heaven. To have this rich, noble mind pour out its stores of knowledge and reflection upon a poor little creature like her was a phenomenal blessing. But that while doing it for her sake and for the sake of the school he was

getting gratification seemed beyond belief. That she—inferior, inconspicuous, unwelcome she—could give him something as well as receive so much was the height of happiness.

But that he was in love with her, that was horrible to contemplate. He was above all else a good man, an upright man, an honorable man. It was one of his glories that he was loyal to a wife who, it must be confessed, was no match for him, and a helpless invalid. Marcella had so admired that he always referred to his wife with respect and affection, as though he were blessed in her. "In love with me?" Marcella reflected. "If I were not so preposterously unworthy it would still be impossible, for he is too loyal to be subject to such a passion."

Then she remembered that Aurelia, the

hateful thing, had admitted that Mr. Romney was too high-minded to be willingly disloyal to his wife or dishonorable toward her. Aurelia's idea was that Mr. Romney was in love but undemonstratively, perhaps unconsciously. If it were true, it would be a still greater proof of his noble nature.

IX

Seen from this angle it was credible and creditable. Marcella's imagination was her great gift. If it had been fruitful when applied to high school studies, how it luxuriated when it dealt with her affections. She had supposed her heart was a Sahara, and it drank up the joy of being loved as the sand swallows the fountain water and bears palms. It was much to be loved, but to be loved by the best and noblest man in all the world, this was a triumph.

It must be so. Sometimes he had said, "Why, I have sometimes thought just that myself; how strange that we should both have hit upon it." Yes, it was strange; it was the miracle of life. And she was the one to share it with him.

No wonder he had been so scrupulous not to manifest his affection. The stronger it was the more he felt the need of guarding the secret, which in a married man must be always a secret. She would guard it as scrupulously.

X

But a girl of eighteen is not always wary. Joy shone in Marcella's eyes, she was a new creature, she seemed to tread on air. Her recitations to Mr. Romney were an elysium, and when she was left with him after school she was in paradise. She tried not to seem conscious of him, es-

pecially not to look at him tenderly, but love flowed from her eyes, and everybody but Mr. Romney saw it.

Nothing was farther from his thought than sentimentality in the schoolroom. To him his pupils were like sons and daughters, the relation was that of the family. Sometimes there would be a trembling of Marcella's voice, a gaze of her eye, that seemed unusual, but he attributed it to her enthusiasm, for she was making wonderful progress.

XI

Mrs. Romney had been a teacher in one of his earlier schools. She needed a good deal of help, and she responded to his assistance by falling in love with him. When he discovered it he was perplexed. It was no part of his purpose to take a wife for years, but she was pretty, winning, and

her affection grew welcome. He responded to it and he married her. Her possibilities were not great, her limitations began to appear final, in conversation she only echoed him and often failed to follow his thought, and when she succumbed to an illness that confined her for the rest of her life to her room, she was far from giving him what men hope for in marriage.

But never once had he swerved from loyalty to her. On the night they became engaged they read over together on their knees the marriage service in the Episcopal prayer-book. All that service meant he assumed, and made it the first rule of life.

Nor was he unrewarded. If she was not his mental companion, she was at least true and loving and trusting, and helpful so far as in her lay. He was accustomed to bring to her his practical problems of

l ife, and he had often been surprised at the help he got from the different angle of her viewpoint. Then her nature was restful. When he came home it was a relief from worry and care. She knew the food he wanted, the chairs that were comfortable for him, when he wanted to talk and when he wanted to think, and she had no wish in life beyond atoning by her assiduity for her lack of capacity. So they were happy together.

XII

One Monday afternoon when the teachers had gone to a conference in a neighboring village, Mrs. Romney had a call from Mrs. Kennicott, wife of the Presbyterian clergyman, who resented Marcella's changing from their church to the Methodist so that she could see Mr. Romney during the service.

"Perhaps that is not the reason," her husband had protested. "A good many people go to the Methodist church to hear Mr. Moser. His sermons are timely, up to date, they say. I still give my people the old-fashioned doctrine that they seem to me to need for their soul's welfare."

" 'Tisn't sermons," Mrs. Kennicott replied indignantly. "Think of the impudence of her taking a side pew so that she can gaze at Mr. Romney's face in the centre aisle."

So a sense of duty had brought her to Mrs. Romney, whose isolation was preventing her from knowing what everybody else in town was gossiping about.

Mrs. Romney was not a sociable person. She read some, she looked out of the window a good deal, she would lie for hours thinking, if light reminiscences deserve

that name. So when Mrs. Kennicott was announced the call seemed formidable, but she welcomed the visitor as politely as possible. Perhaps her coldness stimulated the pastor's wife, for she was soon saying, "I felt it my duty to tell you what all the village is repeating about your husband and Marcella Ticknor."

Ill as she was, Mrs. Romney rose from her reclining chair. "When I want any information about my husband I will ask him," she said. "And if you will pardon my saying so I should be glad if you did not feel like staying longer."

Mrs. Kennicott was thoroughly angry. "There are none so blind as those who won't see," she retorted, as she bounced out of the room.

XIII

Mrs. Romney was flushed with her little triumph. "The idea of her being a mis-

chief-maker between husband and wife," she thought to herself. "Don't I know all about Marcella Ticknor? I am as proud as he is of what he is doing for her. She isn't the only one whom he has helped out of school hours, and made men and women their friends never dreamed they could become. He overworks; sometimes he comes home to supper so tired I almost wish he would give it up. But he is so proud of her and she is showing such promise. How narrow and foul-minded people must be that suspect him of anything but generosity."

It happened that Marcella was to call that afternoon to see whether Mr. Romney would get back in time to give her a lesson here. He had telephoned his wife that he should stay over night to be toastmaster at a banquet, but Mrs. Romney asked

the maid to invite Marcella when she called to come up stairs.

XIV

As Marcella came in, happy, looking Mrs. Romney full in the eye and evidently complimented to be asked in, Mrs. Romney wondered that anybody could suspect her innocence. She showed a fondness for Mrs. Romney that was manifestly without guile, and a sympathy that was not affected. Yet Mrs. Romney recognized the sort of patronage that youth and health and a boundless future must inevitably feel for age and illness and a limited past. Marcella had so much; the elder woman so little.

They chatted away, Mrs. Romney observing the girl with a new interest, and impressed by her quick perception, her keen grasp, her wide background. Just

then the class was reading Andrea del Sarto. "You know it, of course?" Marcella asked.

"I think not," replied Mrs. Romney.

"I thought your husband must have read it to you, he is so fond of it," Marcella went on. "He showed us the picture from which Browning wrote the poem, with Andrea's wistful countenance and Lucrezia's cold face. Think of a painter who could correct Raphael's lines and yet:

" 'Ay, but the soul! he's Raphael! rub it
out!
Still, all I care for, if he spoke the truth,
(What he? why, who but Michael Angelo?
Do you forget already words like these?)'

"Think what it was to chain him to a creature like that who could not follow his thought; who when he said he should work better had to explain,

" 'I mean that I should work more, give you more.'

"And the most pathetic line is at the end,

" 'as I choose.'

"Glory lost, honor lost, happiness lost, and yet he was so tied to her that he would not have it otherwise."

As she prattled on in her enthusiasm Marcella did not surmise how her words struck home. Mrs. Romney remembered now that years ago, when Mr. Romney began to study Browning he had tried to interest her in this poem, but could not make it seem much to her. How different it must be to have this child respond so to its meaning.

When she led Marcella to talk of Mr. Romney she no longer wondered that people suspected a love affair. Marcella's eyes shone, her voice trembled, she wor-

shipped him. Her ingenuousness showed her innocent, but for all time he would be to her the one man. When Marcella went, Mrs. Romney kissed her with sincere affection. She was glad to find one person who knew her husband for the noble man he was.

XV

In his absence it was a long night for his wife. She knew how true he was to her, but for the first time she began to feel at what sacrifice. Marcella was not pretty, but she was round, with plump cheeks, clear complexion, good color, thirty-two sound teeth, sweet breath, in every way a fragrant atmosphere. When she thought of herself, a wreck in appearance, an inside that a drug-store was still experimenting upon, helpless, stupid, she felt how much more Marcella could give him. These

reflections came at a time of physical depression. With no husband at hand to cheer her, a new and horrible purpose began to gather.

Among her several weaknesses was one of the heart, and for this she had a special medicine. "If you feel it coming on again," the doctor had said, "take two drops of this: in extremity you might take four."

"Suppose I should take eight?" she asked laughing.

"Order your coffin first," he had replied in the same tone; "you won't be able to afterward."

She held this bottle in her hand and looked at it. Eight drops. It would be so easy. Her life was known to hang by such slender threads, the snapping of any one of which would end it, that nobody would ever suspect.

Then her husband could have that fresh young form to caress. She remembered how susceptible he was to proximity. Before their engagement if he seemed cold she had only to touch her shoulder to his and he was hers again. There was never anything the world might not see, yet instinctively she knew that the moment she edged up to him he was subject to her. All that had gone long, long age, but why should not her husband experience it again? Why should he not have children, an entire home instead of this hospital chamber of hers?

Her husband got back so late that he went to the school without coming into the house, and on account of an unusual case of discipline he stayed there at noon, sharing the lunch of a boy from the country. He meant to make it up to his wife

that evening, but there was so much accumulated work to do.

To her it was the wrong time for him to be away. Her melancholy became abnormal, her mind became unsettled, visions of her husband happy with Marcella overpowered her and made her think her duty was renunciation. The thought became an obsession. She took the bottle and counted out the drops. One, two, three four; she paused, and then went on, five, six, seven, eight. There they were in the spoon, all the eight, freedom for her husband, happiness for Marcella. With a sort of sublimation of thought she drank them down.

XVI

The president of the board had been disturbed by the scandalous rumors that by this time had got into common con-

versation. This Tuesday afternoon he called in the janitor. "Rumsey," he said, "they are circulating stories about Romney and Marcella Ticknor."

"There ain't nothin' in it," replied the janitor warmly. "There ain't no better man here than Mr. Romney, nor no better girl than Marcella."

"But they are together a good deal when you don't see them. They are together now. How do you know what they do when you are not there?"

"They ain't the kind that needs no spyin' on. I'll take my oath they are tendin' right to the lesson now as if all the school was there."

"I tell you what I wish you would do, Rumsey. Go back to the schoolhouse and take a look. They know you have gone away and don't think you will be coming back."

"I don't like to seem to be pussy-footing," said the janitor, "but I'll do it to oblige you."

XVII

This Tuesday afternoon Mr. Romney was so tired as to be depressed. He had read a paper at the conference which had been warmly discussed and had exhausted his energies at a time when the overwork of after-school recitations had worn him down. Two of his teachers had behaved badly there: he was ashamed of them as representing his school. The pupils after an unusual holiday did not get down to work easily, and there had been considerable friction. Altogether it was hard at four o'clock to take on another burden and try to make clear to Marcella a geometric principle that her mind, bright in so many ways, seemed to find it impossible to grasp.

As it happened his previous teaching had been more effective than he had hoped, and when he toned himself up to his best effort she caught the idea and showed that she understood it clearly. In her exultation her gratitude became more effusive than she intended it should ever become, and when she saw how fatigued he was and realized that it was for her, she suddenly threw her arms about his neck and before he could release himself had kissed him half a dozen times. It was not passion; she knew nothing about passion. It was the mother feeling instinctive in women for the one she loved and was sorry for.

It was just then that the janitor slipped up to the door. He saw it with consternation and grief, but he returned to the president of the board and reported it. He was sent back to fetch the principal and the

girl to the president's office, where the members of the board had been summoned by telephone. The janitor told his story. "Is it true?" the president asked. They could not deny it, they were not permitted to explain. Mr. Romney was dismissed, and Marcella was expelled.

XVIII

The next morning Miss Littrow and Miss Applegate read in the morning newspaper these headlines:

Scandal at Atherton

Principal dismissed, pupil expelled

Principal's wife commits suicide

"Isn't it perfectly awful?" shuddered Miss Applegate.

Miss Littrow compressed her thin lips. "Yes," she said "but we shall get our contracts for next year."

And they did.

In the laboratory

IN THE LABORATORY

"Before I give up my key to the laboratory," said Alvin Wolfe to Mr. Coe, "I wish you would let me show you a point about the new physics room."

Mr. Coe thought it rather presuming, but accompanied his discharged assistant to the third floor, where the new laboratory was finished but not yet furnished. Alvin Wolfe unlocked the door, stood aside for the principal to enter, and then locked the door.

"What I wanted to show you," he said, "is what an admirable place this is for me to give you the damnedest licking a man ever had. You've got me dismissed and my certificate annulled. You've taken

away my job and my occupation. You've got it published in all the county newspapers and it will go all over the country in the associated press dispatches. I've got to sneak off anyway and hide where they don't know me, and I may as well have assault and battery on you to hide away from too."

The room was lit from the top and the bare walls were solid. It was after school and the janitor had gone home. No sound in the room could penetrate down stairs. All this Mr. Coe took in as the young man went on: "I don't intend to kill you. Unless I lose my temper I shall leave you a chance to get your breath again, but I'm going to pound every inch of your muscle into a black and blue pulp. I don't even mean to break any bones, though I shall wrench them some. Yes, I believe I will

smash in your nose: I'll make that my last blow, to push in your nose even with your face. A broken-nosed man always looks especially forlorn, and I'll leave you that to remember me by. How do you like the programme?"

"It looks feasible," replied Mr. Coe. "You have the strength and the opportunity, and apparently the disposition."

"You may bet I've got the disposition," said Alvin, rubbing his right closed fist against his left open hand. "There is no satisfaction of a grudge quite equal to landing your fist square against the other fellow's eye. I'm going to have a circus with you."

"Of course you will be ashamed of it afterward."

"Ashamed of getting even with you after you have ruined my career? Well, I guess

not. It's the one satisfaction I shall carry away with me.

"All the year you've been so superior. You know so much and you've travelled so much, so many big people bow to you and your motives are so high and your character is so unquestioned that you have made me tired. But there's one thing where I come first, and just now it's *the* thing. I am young, twenty-eight years old, in the fullness of strength and vigor and enjoyment. You are sixty years old, and a pretty poor specimen. Thomas Arnold said he would quit teaching when he couldn't run up stairs two steps at a time. You can't do it. You lift your foot at eveny step, and if there are two flights you are relieved when you get to the top.

"You haven't any strength in your

fingers. More than once I have seen you take a pair of pincers to tighten or loosen a simple nut. I can crack a filbert between my thumb and finger. See?" The young man took one from his pocket as he spoke, and cracked it, and put the meat in his mouth. He was always munching.

"Your wife thinks you are a hero and a giant. More than once I have longed to twist your ear between my thumb and finger and make you kneel down, to show what a pigmy you really are. What will your children think when you are brought home in a rubber blanket, like a hospital patient after an operation?

"How inferior you must seem at this moment with your thinning hair, your forceless muscles, your short breath.

"You haven't any appetite any more. You eat three times a day, and in a way

you enjoy your food, but only as a form. If you like something and wish you had been helped a little more fully you don't ask for another plate: it is too much trouble. If a dish pleases my palate I call for another and another, even if I know I am eating too much and shall suffer for it: you forgot years ago how to conceive of such a thing. With you eating is no longer an appetite, it is only a habit. You're in the oat-meal stage. Dr. Johnson defined oats as something they gave horses to eat in England and ate themselves in Scotland. It's what you like to eat best. You don't eat a pound of meat in a month. See that muscle? It comes from a pound of sirloin steak every day I live. You don't live: you just vegetate.

"The same with drink. Do you remember that liquor I brought home from Flo-

rence, that had in every sip the fragrance of a flower-garden? I gave you a glass of it, and you remarked indifferently that it was delicious, and made your little joke that in these days when the regents are illustrating everything to the children they ought to serve this liquor to them so that they might realize what nectar was. But you did not ask for another glass or where it could be bought or even inquire the name of it. You have no appetite even for wines, only the habit of drinking something, no matter what.

"Then you're so damned respectable. I don't know whether I shall want to be respectable when I grow old. It's such a fetter. When anything happens I can predict just what you'll do. You'll do the respectable thing, the conventional thing, the thing that the clergyman and the

banker and the doctor's wife will do, the thing that's down in books of etiquette and ethics. You have about as much initiative as a boy's toy locomotive on a circular track. You can't tell what I'll do. It's not respectable for me to lock you in up here and pound you to a jelly, but I am not limited by respectability. It will take me a good while to become respectable now, after you've caught me cheating in regents examination and lying about it. I haven't made up my mind yet whether it will be worth while even for my later days.

"And you've got property. You can lose your place tomorrow and live as you are living now the rest of your life on what you have saved. How did you save it? By denying yourself everything that appeals to youth and health .like mine. My

will would read like the Frenchman's, 'I have nothing, I owe much, the rest I leave to the poor,' but I've got something out of my money: there's nobody can show me much about what fifty dollars will do in a New York evening. I don't know whether I shall try to save up as I get older: more likely I'll marry a rich wife. But I hate your smug respectability and your bank account and I'm going to show you what they are worth in an empty room against the strongest fullback Ratke college ever had. How do you like the prospect?"

"What you say is interesting and in a way assuring. I suppose a man never takes away another's occupation without fearing he is too severe. I shall never have any compunctions about getting your certificate annulled."

"Do you remember the first lie you caught me in?"

"I don't know which was first: they began early."

"It was one morning when you reproached me for being late and I told you, as I had told you before, that I was in the laboratory. You took me upstairs and showed me a slip of white courtplaster at the bottom of the laboratory door that you had put there after school the night before as a seal, and that was unbroken. It was clever, but I hated you for it, not only for detecting me but for showing a previous suspicion."

"The suspicion was evidently justified."

"But I hated you for it, and I hate you for it now, and I'm going to get even with you now. An' the janitor'll come and hear you moanin' an' he'll say, Wot's

that, an' you'll say, It's just Mr. Wolfe sayin' good bye to me an' he said it powerful hard."

It seemed to Mr. Coe an atavic reversion, as though the spirit of a British longshoreman were surviving in Alvin Wolfe: it was a wonder he did not miss his h's.

"See here, Mr. Wolfe," he said, "you've been telling what you are going to do till it has become tiresome. Has it occurred to you to consider what I am going to do all this while?"

"Why, what can you do?"

"You don't for a minute suppose I am going to stand still and let you pound me like a beefsteak on a butcher's block, do you? Very likely you may come out ahead but your tenor solo will have a lively obligato accompaniment."

The young man's face fell. Some way

he had not thought of resistance, this little hundred-and-fifty-pound man against his great brawn. He remembered that Mr. Coe had a reputation for developing unexpected resources: perhaps he knew jiu-jitsu or the Norwegian twist.

Mr. Coe observed him contemptuously and went on: "Don't you think you have bluffed long enough about what you are going to do, Mr. Wolfe? You are not going to do anything at all. That was evident the minute I told you I was going to hit back. I can't hurt you as much as you could hurt me, but I can hurt you some, and you are too much of a coward to face that some. If you could have me tied up to a post with my hands fastened behind me you would no doubt like to hit me, but with my fists free you don't dare face them. You are the yellowest scoundrel

I ever ran across. Let us end this farce, or I shall be forced to do the attacking myself. Unlock the door."

Stung by Mr. Coe's contempt Alvin Wolfe half raised his fist, but he was afraid of being hurt even a little. He knew it, Mr. Coe knew it, he knew Mr. Coe knew it, and of a sudden he turned, unlocked the door, ran down stairs, and disappeared. Nor was he ever again heard of there.

Behind schedule

BEHIND SCHEDULE

I

When he had recovered consciousness and remembrance he asked, "I suppose there is no hope?"

"No," replied the doctor; "it is a matter of hours, perhaps of minutes."

"I haven't any pain."

"Because you are paralyzed."

"But my mind seems clear."

"It moves independently of your muscles. You took a great risk and you lost out, but it was a noble deed."

"O no, it was inevitable. I can imagine a man questioning whether he has a right to risk his life, but with forty of his own children in danger he cannot hesitate. Were any of them hurt?"

"Four or five were knocked down and bruised as the back wheels skidded around, but none seriously.'

"I ought to have taken more pains to catch the inside rein. I thought the outside one would carry me along with the horses, but it gave way through the martingale and let me under the wheel. A traffic policeman would have known better."

"How like a teacher. You are already generalizing and creating a system for what happens once in a generation. It was well enough done to make you the greatest hero this town has ever known."

"Nobody could have helped trying, and a quicker-thoughted man would have caught the inside rein."

II

"Yes, you may come in. He has not long to live, but his mind is clear. Mr.

Percy, here is the president of the board."

"How do you do, Mr. Balsley? You find me down and out."

"But gloriously. No lesson you ever taught in school was so valuable as that you gave us all this morning. I am come partly as a lawyer to see if there is any help I can give you as to the disposal of your estate."

"Thank you, there is not much of it. My bills are all paid except those of the month, which my salary will take care of, as well as of my funeral expenses. These I want to be light and simple. I have some eight hundred dollars in the bank. I have no near or needy relatives, yet they would I suppose scramble over it, and I would rather leave nothing. Suppose I give you two checks, one for two hundred dol-

lars for a lot in the cemetery, and one for six hundred for a stone."

"What sort of a monument do you want?"

"The plainest possible: say a cube of Scotch granite as big as six hundred will buy, with just *Floyd Percy*, 1888-1916, on top."

"Why not some reference as to how you died?"

"Not a word. This is one reason why I want to provide the inscription myself."

"At least let it be *Floyd Percy, teacher.*"

"*Procul, profani.* That was Louis Agassiz's inscription for himself. Far be it from me to appropriate his glorious title."

"It shall be as you wish. But how can you sign the checks?"

"Put the pen in my mouth and let me

guide it for a cross. There: that will be legal."

"I will execute your wishes at once. There is nothing else I can do? Then good bye, and be assured this school and this village will never cease to revere your memory."

"Sad death, Dr. Kirke, but glorious. It will make this village famous. It is all well enough for him to order his simple cube of granite; I will see that it is started at once. But it will be put at the foot of his grave. We are going to raise by subscription a monument that will cost five thousand dollars if not ten. I have already spoken to some of the parents of the children who were in danger. It will make our school famous all over the country."

III

"Yes, you may enter. Mr. Percy, this is Dr. Doxsee."

"How good of you to come, Doctor."

"In the midst of life we are in death. Who would have thought at breakfast that you would be the first in this community to go?"

"It doesn't matter much when, if only we are ready. My life has not been all I could have wished, but fortunately I have never relied on my good deeds, and I die in full faith."

"Praise God, from whom all blessings flow. Dr. Kirke says you cannot outlive the day, and I suppose naturally the funeral would be on Saturday, but I am hoping you will let it be postponed till Sunday, that it may be our morning service. All the village will want to be there."

"I would like not to have too much made of the accident. Anybody would have tried to save those children, and a quicker man would have caught the inside rein and saved his own life."

"Leave that to me, Mr. Percy. I shall not say more than is deserved, and your modesty is not the least of your merits. And your faith. It is an example to all, even to me."

IV

On the way home Dr. Doxsee stopped at the undertaker's. "The funeral is to be on Sunday morning, in my church," he said.

"When did he pass away?"

"The end had not come when I was there, but Dr. Kirke said it was a matter of an hour or two. Now I want these to be the most elaborate obsequies that have

ever been held in the village. You remember how they filled the Episcopal church with flowers for old Heywood, a man whome everybody detested. Now Floyd Percy died a hero's death, and we must way outdo the Heywood funeral."

"Who will be responsible for the expenses?"

"The board of education, of course. Mr. Balsley will be around to make arrangements, but I wanted to see you first so that your suggestions may lead him up to a fitting memorial service. The casket must be under the pulpit, and I want the east end of the church so banked with flowers that only I and the casket will be seen."

"What flowers shall we use?"

"Most that are sent in from the parents will probably be roses. Multiply them,

but telegraph to Ipswich and see how many violets you can get. If we can have a band of violets clear across the east end of the church it will make the Heywood decorations seem cheap. But whatever you get, have profusion. Let it be remembered for years as the most distinguished church function ever held in the village."

V

"This is the reporter for the *Argus*, Mr. Percy. Do you want to see him?"

"O yes, let him come in. How do you do, Mr. Albro?"

"Thank you for seeing me at such a time. This village is the most glorious spot in North America today on account of your heroism."

"Put on the soft pedal, Mr. Albro. A teacher sees a runaway truck making for

a group of his own school children: what is he to do?"

"Look out for himself first, usually. Glory to you, the Albino schoolmaster sets an example for the whole world. Would you like to hear what I have written?"

"Not if it is on that key. Any man would have done the same thing, and most of them would have been less clumsy. If you must tell of it at all just give facts, not heroics."

"That is the most heroic feature of it that it seems to you so commonplace. What a world this would be if such actions were commonplace. Can you give me a photograph?"

"No, I haven't a photograph. The glimpses I have got of my face when I was brushing my hair have not encouraged me to perpetuate my features."

"Can you give me the address of a photographer who has your negative?"

"I haven't had a picture taken since graduation. I had a smooth face then and I haven't shaved since, so there would be little resemblance."

"How long is he likely to last, Dr. Kirke?"

"Not long; possibly into the evening."

"Shall I be safe in getting it into the morning *Argus*?"

"O yes, perfectly."

VI

"I hardly think I ought to let him see you. There have been several callers and he is near the end."

"Great heavens, doctor, do you know who I am? I am manager for the Up-to-date movies. By Sunday this heroic act

will be seen actually in motion in every city east of Chicago. It will make him and your village famous."

"O let him come in, Dr. Kirke. I am not so very tired, and this seems funny enough to be interesting."

"Funny, Mr. Percy? There are men all over this country that would give up their lives gladly just for the publicity you are going to have, to say nothing of the heroism."

"But how are you going to reproduce it?"

"Easiest thing in the world. We have engaged the same horses, a truck that looks just the same, and the very same children. A man of your height and build will do just what you did, and I am taking note of your beard so that he can have on one just like it."

"But suppose he should miss the rein, then the children will be hurt."

"He won't miss it. He does this sort of thing every day, all over the country."

"Tell him to be sure to catch the inside rein: not blunder as I did."

"Forget it! If he caught the inside rein he would be carried along all right, but the horses wouldn't be swung around short enough to escape the children. You did just the right thing."

"Really? Well, thank you for that; I have been blaming myself. But suppose by some chance he should miss the rein, what will happen to the children; and what will happen to him if he falls under the wheel as I did?"

"He won't miss it, but if he did there would be no danger. The truck looks like the other, but it is made of papier

maché and doesn't weigh a hundred pounds. The wheel will roll over him without hurting him, and if the truck hit the children it wouldn't bruise them. No, it is an exact reproduction, entirely without danger."

"This is preposterous enough to be amusing. Go ahead, with my blessing."

"I am wondering if you will let me have one of your old suits of clothes. You won't want it any more, and it will give reality to the motion-pictures."

"Certainly. Help yourself to any in the closet there; the brown one I wore most. I only wish I could see the show myself. This is certainly a wonderful age."

VII

"Miss Bonta, I hardly thought we should need a nurse, but he lingers surprisingly,

so I will leave him in your hands. When the crisis comes you may telephone me. He is sleeping now. He cannot live long, and the only question is whether he shall die comfortably or in pain, so I have given him a heavy opiate."

VIII

"This is the *Argus*, Dr. Kirke. Any change in Mr. Percy?"

"The nurse hasn't telephoned me. I will call her up.—No, she says he is sleeping quietly. He must have an amazing vitality. Better let the obituary go over till Friday."

IX

"This is Dr. Doxsee, Dr. Kirke. At what hour did the end come?"

"Why, the fact is, it hasn't come yet. He was living this morning and his landlady got nervous and worried with all the

calls and excitement and insisted on his being taken to the hospital. You know the new superintendent there, a Johns Hopkins man who thinks nobody else knows anything. He has taken the case right out of my hands, and says there is no telling how long Mr. Percy may live."

"This is most annoying. The whole point of my sermon is the suddenness of his death. I am not sure we can have the the funeral Sunday if he lingers clear through the day. We should have had the church full, and I will guarantee I shouldn't have left a dry eye. I never had such a chance before. And now it will probably have to go over to next week, and my discourse will all have to be rewritten."

X

"Mr. Balsley, this is Dr. Patmore, at the hospital. Mr. Percy is still living

and decidedly gaining. I want to make inquiry as to who is responsible for his expenses."

"How much a week?"

"Sixty-five dollars, including day and night nurses."

"He has no means of his own. He bought a lot in the cemetery, and it is a rule of the trustees never to release a purchase. He ordered a block of granite and the man set to work on it at once. The name and the date are both cut, so there is no getting that back; as things are going the date may be wrong. The board is of course willing to do what is reasonable. His salary was forty-five dollars a week. We will continue that for the present, and let the teachers call on him now and then for advice. Can't you get the expense down to that?"

XI

"Miss Mytens, how long are we going to keep on going to the hospital to consult Mr. Percy?"

"I suppose we can't help it; the board orders us to."

"It was all well enough for two or three times, but he doesn't get any worse, and it begins to look like a permanent thing."

"I must confess I don't like it, talking with a man who is only a face, like an advertisement for long neckties."

"Let's protest to the board that there is no use in it—Mr. Percy can't know what is really going on: and it is uncanny—it makes you shudder to go to the hospital day after day."

"Is it your turn today? Give Mr. Percy a little idea of how we feel about it, Miss Mytens, and I will start a petition for the board meeting tonight."

XII

"I am so glad to see you, Miss Mytens. Your face brings every child in your room fresh to my mind. Reba Jermoe getting over her lameness?"

"Yes, she walks pretty well now."

"How about Beriah Sewall's pronunciation? It is so like mine when I was a boy, and I suppose his bringing up in central Massachusetts was about the same. I never used to sound my r's, and pronounced father and farther alike, just as he does. And coat, stone, it takes me back to Groton to hear the short sounds he gives the o's. And *srimp* for *shrimp*—I never used to get in that *h*. But he is all right on the a's: these New York children practise in vain to get *fast* and *ask* and *answer* like their New England neighbors.

Do you think Beriah is getting to pronounce like the other boys?"

"I guess so; I haven't noticed much. You lie here and think about the school and things seem important to you that we don't bother with."

"I hope you don't find it disagreeable to come, Miss Mytens."

"To tell the truth, I do, Mr. Percy; we all do. Of course the board doesn't think it can go on paying your salary without any return, and so it orders us to come here once a week, but it is a good deal to ask of us."

"I am sorry, Miss Mytens; I had not thought of it that way. It has been such a joy to me to keep track of the school and of all those dear pupils that I had not realized what an imposition it was upon you. Don't let me keep you any longer this afternoon."

XIII

At the board meeting that night Mr. Maclise said:

"Mr. President, I have here a petition from the teachers of the school asking that the regulation that each teacher report every week to Mr. Percy be rescinded, and I declare I think there is justice in it. He can't help them much, and if it is only an excuse for paying him his salary let us drop it."

Mr. Aram nodded his dead emphatically.

"I must say, Mr. President," he said, "I don't see why this paying his salary should go on. When we first voted it we supposed he was on the point of death. He has lived now nine weeks and Dr. Patmore says he may live indefinitely. Suppose we set a limit, and hire a new principal."

"We must remember, gentlemen, that he owes his condition to the risking his life to save our children."

"Yes, and we are willing to recognize it in a reasonable way. But we must consider the school first. It needs a principal there in the building; it is showing the results of lack of one. We must hire another man, and the district will never stand for our paying two salaries."

"Isn't it a matter for the overseer of the poor?" asked Mr. Rennie.

"I talked with him and first he claimed that Mr. Percy wasn't a resident of the county. I assured him that he was; that he had lived here ever since he graduated from college and had never voted anywhere else. Then he said if the county had to support him it certainly wouldn't pay any forty-five dollars a week. It might

take him in at the county hospital. But of course he could have only the ordinary treatment."

"Mr. President, you were proposing a monument to cost five or ten thousand dollars, by subscription. Why will not those same people subscribe the same amounts to make him comfortable the rest of his days?"

"I tried that, gentlemen, but they said it was a different thing. Put up a monument and pay for it and it is there for all time, a credit to the village. Subscribe for a hospital bill and it will be a constant drain, money dumped into a quicksand, as long as he lives: and he may outlive every man of us."

XIV

The telephone bell rang. Mr. Balsley went into the other room and took up the receiver.

"This is Dr. Patmore. I am grieved to say that Mr. Percy has just breathed his last."

"Wasn't it sudden?"

"Astonishingly so. He was like a Ford runabout that had collided with a touring-car, badly disabled but the engine still vigorous. Some way late this afternoon all the courage oozed out of him. Stimulants had no effect, and his heart stopped abruptly. I am sorry. His was a most interesting case, and his vitality had been phenomenal. But all at once it went, and the end came."

XV

Mr. Balsley came back into the meeting.

"Gentlemen," he said, "we need discuss the matter no longer. Mr. Percy died at seven fifteen."

"Mr. President," said Mr. Aram, "I

move that a committee be appointed, of whom the president shall be chairman, to express our grief at the untimely death of one who was a faithful and successful principal, and whose demise resulted from an act so heroic that it will always be a grateful memory of this village."

The resolution was handsomely engrossed and hangs in the room of the board of education.

THE BLANK LETTER

THE BLANK LETTER

I

"Leon," said Alwyn Graham, "it has happened that during the year I have dined with a dozen of the best fellows of the class, and of them all I think you are the most to be envied."

"I am certainly happy. I have a great deal more than I deserve."

"I don't think any man in the class would say that, Leon. You were a staunch standby always."

"What a lot of fine fellows we had."

"Yes, I think ours was an exceptional class. There weren't as large a proportion of superior men in any other of the seven while we were there. But we all

looked up to you. Most of us were reasonably square, and looked other people in the eye when we talked to them, but some way when a man talked to you he felt he was seeing right down into your soul. Every man in the class swore by you."

"You were all too good to me."

"We couldn't be. And it is a real delight to see you so comfortable and prosperous. This was your wife's home, of course?"

"Yes, her great-grandfather built it. How impossible it seems over here. But aside from new heating and plumbing and an occasional porch we haven't needed to alter it. They hewed their timber in those days and it lasts."

"What was her great-grandfather?"

"He was a lawyer and ended by being county judge. Her grandfather and father were physicians. Her father rather

wanted me to be, but I had always looked forward to teaching, so I took the school here."

"And have staid here ever since, and never regretted it, I suppose."

"Not for a minute. Every year I enjoy my work more. I am beginning to have grandchildren of some of my first pupils, and it is such a delight to watch hereditary characteristics. What is more, I really feel that every generation is a little better than the last."

"What a beautiful woman your wife is."

"I am glad you could see her at home. I haven't brought her to the class reunions because we have always had children too young to travel and we couldn't go without them. But isn't she a queen here? We really grew up together, for I have lived in this house ever since I was sixteen, and

every year she has shown new grace and loveliness. Think what a joy it is to have my children grow up under such a mother."

"You must be proud of them."

"I am, but that is not the first word. I am fond of them beyond expression. Talk about children being grateful for their parents' care! We are grateful every day for the chance to enjoy bringing them up."

"Work of the kind you like and plenty of it, abundant means, a comfortable home, and a happy family—you've got it about all in, Leon."

"I have indeed, Alwyn. Come again the first chance you have. I want you to get periodical views of my youngsters, so that you may see them in the making. Good-bye till next time."

II

When his guest had gone Leon picked up the evening mail, which had lain undisturbed. There were a bill for books, a request to speak at a teachers conference, a request from a graduate for her mark in a geometry examination. He laid these aside and picked up the last. As he opened it he found inside another sealed envelope addressed

Blutch Cuddebac

Timoleon, N. Y.

His face grew ashen as though he was gazing upon a spectre of the buried past. He sank back in a chair, holding the envelope in his hand and staring at it.

For Blutch Cuddebac was his real name. He had never known parents. His earliest recollections were of an orphan asylum in a small California city. He had run

away from it and gone to a larger city, where he lived from hand to mouth and fell in with a tough gang. He had always pilfered as a means of getting a living, and with these new comrades he got into bolder operations. Finally they undertook to rob a post-office in a private house in a hamlet near by, were caught and convicted and sentenced. While the five lay in jail awaiting transportation to state prison, they planned an escape, overpowered the keeper, and had almost got away when a guard unexpectedly appeared and pointed a gun at them. The eldest of the five, a seasoned criminal, made a dash for the guard, got the pistol away from him and killed him. The shots brought assistance and the five prisoners scattered. Two were captured and soon after hanged, but Blutch somehow got to San Francisco,

and on the outskirts ran into the mate of a ship about to sail around the Horn but a man short. It was Blutch's chance, and he was on the vessel before anybody had observed him.

III

On the long voyage, with steady work and assured meals, such as they were, he had plenty of time to think. Whoever his parents were they must have had good instincts and refinement, for by the time he reached New York Blutch had determined that he had lived a criminal's life quite long enough. In fact he had determined to be so upright he would lean backward. He had saved his pay, he bought respectable clothes, and he determined to find a place to work in the country. He adopted the name of Leon Walton, put up at a respectable boarding house, and watched the *New York Herald*.

One day he saw this advertisement: "Wanted, a boy in the office of a country physician. Apply to X23, Herald office."

It was just his chance. He wrote an application, and not to lose an opportunity said in it that he would be within call of the telephone Warren 4162 from eight o'clock the next morning till two. His promptness pleased the advertiser, who called him up at half-past eight and made an appointment to meet him at once.

To his inquiries Leon, as he now thought of himself, replied unhesitatingly and frankly. He had been brought up in the city (he did not say what city), he had a fair common school education, he had drifted about, but he felt that he wanted steady employment, and longed to live in the country. Dr. Dunlap was pleased

with him, did not ask for references, and took him home that day.

Before they had reached Timoleon he liked the boy's sentiments and purposes so well that he made him one of the family. He found Leon so absolutely trustworthy in every way that he began to lean upon him, and presently to look upon him as a son. He arranged for him to attend the high school, where the boy made such a record that the good doctor said to him, "Leon, I am going to put you through college." As it happened there was a small university in the town, so that it was possible for Leon to make his courses while still caring for Dr. Dunlap's horse and much of his office work. It was a proud day for both when Leon was graduated, again with distinguished honors. "There is nothing you cannot ask of me now,"

the doctor said, his kindly eyes beaming.

"I am going to put you to the test," replied Leon. "I have never spoken to your daughter of love, but if you sanction it I should like to ask her to be my wife."

"It is the dearest wish of my heart," was the reply; and upon inquiry it was found to be the dearest wish of Cordelia's heart too.

So they were married, and Leon took the village school, and kept it even when a professorship in the college was offered to him. "Some way it seems just my work," he said. His lines had fallen in pleasant places.

In all these years the memory of his California life had almost disappeared. At first as a matter of caution, afterward of habit, he never spoke of the western coast or of the ocean. He watched the

San Francisco newspapers and learned that one of the two surviving members of the band had been caught and executed; while the other like himself had diasppeared so absolutely that he was supposed to be dead. Probably they thought the same of him. How could the fifteen-year old Blutch Cuddebac be recognized in Leon Walton, college graduate, principal for years of the high school in a college town? His early days had seemed no longer a part of his biography.

IV

So this letter addressed to Blutch Cuddebac came like lightning out of a clear sky. Who had discovered him under so striking an alias? Perhaps the only other survivor of the five, Dan Prout, the man who really killed the guard. He hoped not. It made him shudder to recall that

relentless countenance. If Dan was after him and had found him, the rest of his life would be a hell. Apparently it must be he. If it had been any one connected with the state government the first notice would be his arrest.

Manifestly the letter meant blackmail. Should he submit? He could put up quite an amount. He had never handled his wife's money. She had received a considerable inheritance from her father, but Leon had refused even to take charge of it. "My salary is enough to support us," he used to say, "and we will save your income for the children." Even then he had put quite a bit aside. He could raise at a pinch five thousand dollars.

But would it be of any use? The word of a blackmailer was of no value. Yield to his demand now and he would come

back with more exacting ones. If it really was this Dan Prout there would be no limit. Dan could not be scared out by threat of exposure as the actual murderer, because Leon had no proof except his own statement, and he was another member of the gang, subject to the same punishment, actually at this moment in danger of being hanged.

V

But it was not for himself he shuddered. Think of his Cordelia, sole representative of the honored family of old Judge Dunlap, brought up so tenderly the wind had always been tempered for her, gentle soul that hardly had known sorrow, delicate sense of honor that a breath would sully, clinging to her husband's absolute integrity as her anchor in life, what would happen to her if she discovered that she was the

wife of a convicted criminal over whose head the halter hung? If there were a way to prevent it he must find it.

And his children, how scrupulous he had been that there should be no slightest thought or deed in which they might not follow his example. How he had prized for them the honors that had come to him, especially the tributes to his distinguished probity. For that matter, how about the effect on his pupils to discover that the principal whose example had been held up before them from childhood was a convicted criminal?

VI

Had he been wrong to come to Timoleon? He could not think so: it was his one way to build up a substantial moral character. He had done that. Whatever he may have been as a boy, since he

came here he had maintained high ideals, had lifted them higher every year, had lived up to them as far as mortal could hope to.

Ought he to have married Cordelia? If he had supposed that it was conceivable that after all these years his identity could be discovered he would not have dreamed of it. All the seven years he had lived by her side he had been scrupulous not to express or instill a feeling of love. It was not till he had become a college graduate, with the respect of his fellows and the approval of the faculty, that he had asked her father for permission to pay suit to her. Surely by that time Blutch Cuddebac was forgotten. Evidently it was unwarranted to marry her, but it was an error of judgment. He deplored it but he could not feel that he had consciously wronged her.

VII

Ought he to tell her? If he were sure it would become known, yes; he might better make it known in his own way and in his own time. But even yet it was not certain she must know. Somebody had the secret, but he might not really intend to make it known. Dan Prout, for instance, would be risking his own neck to expose Blutch. Even if he meant to do it there might be some slip. The blow would be so overwhelming that he must lose no possible chance of saving her from it. No, he would not tell her till it was sure she must know it.

Once more, should he pay blackmail? As his mind came back to this the answer was positive—no. The exposure would be only delayed.

VIII

All this time the letter had lain in his hands unopened. He slit the envelope and took out the sheet of paper it contained. It was absolutely blank. There was not even a water-mark on it. It was just a sheet of white paper. Both inside and outside envelopes were addressed on a typewriter. All the letter told was that somebody knew who and where he was. How that person intended to use the information was left to Leon's imagination.

There was something in this more terrifying than a threat would have been. A sword hung over Leon's head, but what kind of a sword, held by what kind of a hair, likely to fall when, could only be surmised.

Care was heavy upon Leon's heart.

He affected unusual cheerfulness, but his nights were long imaginings of evils.

IX

After school one day his preceptress said to him, "Mr. Walton, may I make myself disagreeable?"

"How you are playing with the potential present," he replied with an attempt at jocularity that had lately seemed frequent and forced. "You may make yourself disagreeable but you can't."

"O yes, I can," she replied sadly, "and I am going to. I am afraid you won't forgive me but I must speak. I have never said much about what you and Mrs. Walton did for me when my mother died. I was very near the jumping-off place and you saved me. I was in no condition to be effusive, but I had two wishes, that no harm might ever come to you two, but

that if it came I might be where I could help."

"Pray what harm are you thinking of, Miss Milburn?"

"I don't know, but I know it is here. I know you have not confided in your wife, so it must affect her. I know it is breaking your heart and keeping you on the rack with apprehension. I know if you will trust me it will be as safe as if oceans buried it. I don't know whether I can assist you, but I know it will help you to tell me about it."

Impossible as it seemed, Leon did tell her, and it did help him.

There was a Christmas vacation of a fortnight. "I am going west," she said "and I want to think it over. Perhaps I can suggest something when I return."

X

The night before school reopened Leon was called up on the telephone. "I have just got back," Miss Milburn said, "and I want very much to see you this evening. Can you come over?"

When he entered the room she approached him holding out both hands. "Your worries are over," she said.

"What do you mean?"

"My vacation trip was to Sacramento. There is a pardon of Blutch Cuddebac, signed by the governor."

Leon looked at it with wondering eyes. "How did you get it?" he asked.

"Without telling your present name or address. I took lots of testimonials but they were about myself, and I explained that it would defeat the purpose of the pardon to have your present name and

position known. I gave only my home address, and Timoleon was not mentioned. The governor believed me, said that the delinquencies of an untaught boy of fifteen should not cloud such a life as you have lived since, and not only signed the pardon but thanked me for giving him an opportunity to do so worthy a deed. Incidentally he remarked that if it really was Dan Prout that sent you the blank letter and if he appears again, he hopes you will assist the government authorities in getting a clutch on him. He is the one man of the five they wanted more than any other to lay their hands upon."

XI

But Leon never heard again from his anonymous correspondent. If it was Dan Prout he must have got word of the pardon.

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